

Giant Ragweed

(*Ambrosia trifida*)

Giant Ragweed is so named because it is the largest of all the Ragweed plants. It can grow as tall as 15 feet tall, and is found in every US state except for Alaska. It can be found in waste areas, disturbed soils, and along crop fields. It is considered an invasive species in many localities, as it can reduce the yields of many cultivated crops.

Giant Ragweed can be distinguished from the other Ragweeds by its size, but also by the deeply lobed leaves, which are unique to Giant Ragweed.

Giant Ragweed produces huge amounts of highly allergenic pollen. The pollen is considered a severe allergen. Giant Ragweed male flowers bloom as early as June and can continue to pollinate up until the first frost. All of the Ragweeds cross-react to some degree. Giant Ragweed demonstrates strong cross-reactivity with Short (Common) Ragweed, Western Ragweed and False Ragweed. The actual pollen grains from one Ragweed type is virtually impossible to distinguish from another, at least in normal pollen reporting methods. Thus you will see Ragweed pollen counts only as “Ragweed”, which can include all types of Ragweed pollen.

Ragweed is a well documented as a significant cause of allergy symptoms – in allergic rhinitis, allergic conjunctivitis and asthma. One study in Chicago found that 47% of allergic patients demonstrated skin test reactivity to Ragweed, more than the 42% of all other weeds combined!

